MEETING SOLDIER NEEDS THROUGH ACQUISITION LOGISTICS

Jane Benson

"Safe, easy to operate, and efficient," are the words that describe the Modern Burner Unit (MBU) that soldiers use in the field to cook food and heat water for cleaning pots and pans. However, optimal equipment performance can be compromised if a soldier mistakenly uses gasoline instead of JP-8 fuel to power the MBU—an easy mistake to make since the MBU's predecessor, the M2 Burner, is fueled by gasoline.

New Equipment Training (NET) is one of many important functions performed by the U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command's (SBCCOM's) Integrated Materiel Management Center (IMMC). NET, which is part of the IMMC's larger acquisition logistics strategy, ensures that soldiers in the field know how to safely and properly use new equipment. Through acquisition logistics, the IMMC anticipates and meets the equipment support, maintenance, sustainment, and training needs of soldiers. The IMMC also supports biological chemical systems from development to disposal.

Supportability

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Supportability is an important part of IMMC's acquisition logistics initiatives. Edith Lentz, Manager of the IMMC's Integrated Logistics Support (ILS) Team, explained that ILS encompasses beginning-to-end materiel systems planning. Its goals, she adds, are to influence operational and materiel requirements and design specification, define support requirements, develop and acquire required supports, and repeatedly examine support requirements throughout the service life of the system.

Closing The Gap

ILS ensures that all elements are planned, developed, tested, evaluated, acquired, and deployed before or simultaneously with the materiel system. Through ILS, the IMMC reduces manpower and support costs for soldier equipment, as well as improves reliability, maintainability, producibility, and management efficiency.

The IMMC staff recognizes that the support and maintenance of soldier equipment that may be used for decades is just as important as its design. The IMMC supports soldiers by closing the gap between the engineers and scientists who develop soldier systems and the soldiers who use them. Under the acquisition logistics philosophy, system designers; acquisition logisticians; and program, project, and product managers work together to identify and factor in support considerations against system costs, schedules, and performance parameters.

IMMC employees ensure that equipment is delivered on time and in good condition. They coordinate and anticipate maintenance, repair needs, and spare parts requirements. IMMC employees also support acquisition logistics by specializing in item management, transportation, packaging, customer service, and other support disciplines. Moreover, the IMMC provides thorough training for the safe and efficient use of equipment.

NET is accomplished in combination with Total Package Fielding (TPF), the Army's standard fielding method used to provide units a new product or improved materiel system and all its related support materiel at one time. The materiel is consolidated into unit-level packages. Jay Yurchuck, leader of the NET/TPF group, explained that NET involves the materiel developer or provider teaching the tester, trainer, supporter, and user about operating and maintaining new equipment. He said that the NET/TPF group brings soldiers a new piece of equipment accompanied by all that is needed to operate and support it, such as technical repair manuals, supply documentation, and enough repair parts for initial operation.

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Yurchuck pointed out that the importance of what IMMC does is exemplified in the ongoing, worldwide fielding of the MBU.

Proper Training

The MBU will also be an important component in the containerized kitchen. The burner is fielded to units in Korea and the Pacific, as well as the Far East. PM, Soldier Support manages the MBU among other soldier systems and equipment.

Proper training on the MBU is essential, even though soldiers have used the M2 Burner since the 1960s. "Although JP-8 fuel is far less volatile than gasoline, soldiers who are used to powering the M2 with gasoline might mistakenly use gasoline with the MBU, too," Yurchuck said. "This is why we work extensively with the product developer to develop the proper training for our soldiers. Then we travel worldwide to ensure that soldiers stationed everywhere know how to use equipment properly."

Provisioning is another important way that the IMMC supports soldiers and is part of the IMMC's acquisition logistics strategy. Provisioning helps ensure the availability of spare and repair parts for the assigned systems' life cycles. Item management, cataloguing, budget planning, and other input also help ensure parts availability. The provisioner/equipment specialist establishes a maintenance allocation chart by determining what level of maintenance is needed to remove, repair, and dispose of the item, according to Rick Burleson, an IMMC Equipment Specialist. Determining which items are to be provisioned is based on historical requirements or demands of similar pieces of equipment and any failures occurring with testing of the equipment during the acquisition process.

Accurate Information

Burleson explained that provisioning actions must be completed early in the life cycle as technical publications must include National Stock Numbers (NSNs) for every item identified as a provisioned item. Supply actions by the provisioner ensure the item is on the shelf and available for the soldier by the date that the first unit receives the equipment. The provisioning database is reviewed on a recurring basis to maintain part number and NSN accuracy as repair parts become obsolete and are replaced with more modern or upgraded items throughout the life of the system. "The equipment specialist/provisioner is always in touch with soldiers in the field to assist with maintenance and publications issues," Burleson said.

IMMC's technical publication group ensures that technical support documentation such as user manuals are accessible to the soldier in the field. The technical publications team prepares and edits technical publications for accuracy, readability, and proper format. The group works closely with the IMMC's equipment specialists to test the equipment against the manual to ensure that soldiers have the best instructions possible at their fingertips.

Through acquisition logistics, the IMMC staff provides cradle-to-grave support and maintenance for soldier equipment.

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